

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 22350

CINCPAC

ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA, TH

SUBJECT: THAI STATEMENT ON RELATIONS WITH LAOS

REF: BANGKOK 22256

SUMMARY: THAI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RELEASED STATEMENT OCTOBER 21 SETTING OUT ITS VERSION OF EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH NEW LAO GOVERNMENT. TEXT BEING TRANSMITTED IN SEPTTEL. IT NOTES IN PARTICULAR THAT LAO GOVERNMENT HAS REJECTED THAI SUGGESTION (REFTEL) FOR JOINT NAVAL PATROLS ON MEKONG RIVER AS MEANS OF AVOIDING ARMED CLASHES ALONG BOUNDARY BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES THAT HAVE BEEN FEATURE OF PAST FEW WEEKS. STATEMENT, WHICH WAS REPORTED PROMINENTLY IN BANGKOK PRESS OCT. 22, IS POLITE BUT FIRM IN TONE, CLEARLY PLACING BLAME ON LAOTIAN GOVERNMENT FOR FAILURE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. END SUMMARY.

1. AS A FOLLOW-UP TO MEETING OCTOBER 20 BETWEEN FOREIGN

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MINISTER CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN AND LAO AMBASSADOR TO THAI-

LAND OUAN SNITH (REFTEL), THAI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
RELEASED ON OCT. 21 FOUR AND ONE-HALF PAGE STATEMENT ON
THAI-LAO RELATIONS. IT STATES THAT LAOS HAS REJECTED
THAI PROPOSAL FOR JOINT NAVAL PATROLS ON MEKONG RIVER AS
MEANS OF CALMING SITUATION RESULTING FROM RECENT ARMED
CLASHES ALONG BOUNDARY BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. IT DETAILS
NUMEROUS THAI EFFORTS TO HAVE CONTACT WITH PGNU AND EXCHANGE
VIEWS ON ISSUES OF COMMON INTEREST BUT NOTES THAT RTG HAS
NEVER RECEIVED POSITIVE RESPONSE TO ANY OF ITS PROPOSALS.
RTG ADVISES LAO TO SET ITS OWN HOUSE IN ORDER FIRST RATHER
THAN ACCUSE THAILAND OF GANGING UP WITH REFUGEES TO COMMIT
UNFRIENDLY ACTS AGAINST LAOS. STATEMENT CONCLUDES WITH
COMMENT (ADDED JUST BEFORE RELEASE) THAT FOREIGN MINISTER
CHATCHAI REMINDED LAO AMBASSADOR OF IMPORTANCE RTG ATTACHES
TO MINISTERIAL-LEVEL MEETINGS OF JOINT THAI-LAO COMMITTEE
AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT SUCH A MEETING COULD TAKE PLACE
WHEN PGNU FOREIGN MINISTER PHOUMI VONGVICHIT IS IN
VIENTIANE.

2. IN DISCUSSION OF STATEMENT WITH EMBOFF OCT. 22 THEP
THEWAKUN, CHIEF OF MFA SOUTHEAST ASIA DIVISION, SAID THAT
STATEMENT WAS INTENDED TO BE "MATTER OF FACT" EXPOSITION
OF THAI POINT OF VIEW. BASED ON THAI "RIGHT OF REPLY" TO
FREQUENT LAO CHARGES, IT WAS CONSIDERED BY MFA TO BE
NEITHER APOLOGETIC NOR ABRASIVE. INSTEAD, THEP SAID, TONE
WAS IN LINE WITH CHATCHAI'S OCT. 20 REMARKS TO LAO AMBASSADOR.

THEP EXPRESSED VIEW THAT BARRAGE OF UNFRIENDLY WORDS FROM
LAO SIDE WILL NOT KNUE MUCH LONGER BECAUSE LAO WILL
COME TO REALIZE HOW DEPENDENT THEY ARE ON THAILAND'S GOOD
WILL.

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF STATEMENT BEING TRANS-
MITTED IN SEPTTEL. SEEMS CURIOUS THAT STATEMENT ISSUED
ONLY IN THAI AND THAT MFA ENGLISH TRANSLATION WILL NOT BE
AVAILABLE FOR SEVERAL DAYS. WHILE TONE OF STATEMENT WAS
POLITE, ITS SUBSTANCE WAS QUITE FIRM, AND OUR INITIAL
IMPRESSION IS THAT IT WILL DO LITTLE TO IMPROVE PRESENT
COOL STATE OF THAI-LAO RELATIONS.

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